



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS

333 Market Street, Room 923
San Francisco, California 94105-2195

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

JUL 24 1997

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:


Following the record flooding in Central California, the Governor requested Federal assistance. Due to the extensive number of levees damaged in Central California by the flood, significant repair and restoration was anticipated under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers PL84-99 program. Considering lessons learned in previous flood recovery programs, the Clinton Administration directed the establishment of an Interagency Task Force (ITF). Under the leadership of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the ITF would include state and Federal agency participation. The purpose of the ITF was to serve as a vehicle to coordinate multi-agency review and implementation needs. Likewise, the ITF would provide a forum for agencies to discuss and resolve concerns related to recovery actions. In that regard, the enclosed issue paper is provided for information.

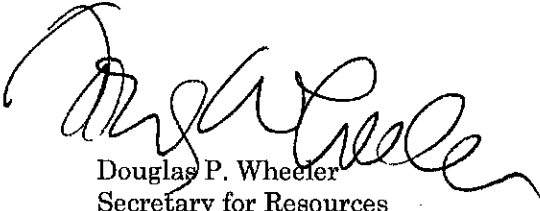
Further, one of the recovery actions was to consider possible implementation of nonstructural alternatives instead of levee repairs. The implementation of a nonstructural alternative is based on the premise of a willing sponsor and willing seller. The Corps' short- and long-term direction in this effort is being managed for consistency with the recommendations in the Governor's recently released Flood Emergency Action Team Report, which addresses the future of flood policies in California.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Water Resources hosted their first two outreach meetings on June 24 and June 25, 1997, in Modesto and Sacramento, respectively. A third meeting was held in Marysville on July 24, 1997. The purpose of the meetings were to give all interested parties important information relative to flood recovery activities. In addition, a discussion of nonstructural alternatives to levee repairs was presented. The meetings also provided a forum for questions and answers.

We want to ensure that every opportunity for nonstructural approaches to rehabilitation have been explored as part of the flood recovery effort. We ask you to again consider whether nonstructural alternatives have the potential to reduce flood damages in your area.

If you would like to discuss potential nonstructural alternatives or have any ideas that you believe we have overlooked regarding nonstructural alternatives in connection with the flood recovery effort please contact us. Our points of contact are Mr. Paul W. Dobie, Interagency Task Force Staff Chief, at (916) 364-3030 or Mr. Ward Tabor, General Manager, Reclamation Board, at (916) 653-5434.


J. Richard Capka
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Division Engineer


Douglas P. Wheeler
Secretary for Resources
California Resources Agency

Enclosure



**Interagency Task Force
Flood Plain Management Activities – Issue Paper
California Floods of 1997**

July 21, 1997

INTRODUCTION

Following the record flooding in Central California, The Governor requested Federal assistance. Due to the extensive number of levees damaged in Central California by the flood, significant repair and restoration was anticipated under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers PL84-99 program. Based on lessons learned in previous flood recovery programs, the Clinton Administration directed that an Interagency Task Force (ITF) be established. In addition, the ITF would be under the leadership of the Corps of Engineers, and would include state and Federal agency participation. The purpose of the ITF was to serve as a vehicle to coordinate multi-agency review and implementation needs. Likewise, the ITF would provide a forum for agencies to discuss and resolve concerns related to recovery actions.

Complementary with the Corps efforts, other state and Federal agencies were working on other nonstructural issues. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was working on the expansion of the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge that was consistent with the nonstructural alternative approach. The State of California, through the efforts of the Governor's Flood Emergency Action Team (FEAT), was identifying long term strategies for recovery efforts including the use of nonstructural alternatives. In addition, the California legislature was looking at potential bond issues that would provide funding mechanisms for nonstructural solutions as well as upgrades to existing flood control systems. Through these efforts, it became apparent that a multi-level/multi-agency approach was needed. This was necessary in order to fully develop a floodplain management strategy that would include provisions for nonstructural alternatives.

In the 1997 flood recovery, options included a provision for nonstructural solutions instead of repairs to damaged levees. This necessitated the need to include a new element to the ITF, that of the ITF-Floodplain Management Working Group. Members of this group include representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Water Resources (includes Division of Floodplain Management), California Reclamation Board, CALFED, FEMA, NRCS, FWS, and BOR. The ITF "White Paper" issued on May 19, 1997, described this effort.

Subsequent to the inclusion of the FPM Working Group as part of the ITF, the group has achieved the following:

1. Determined Potential Funding Matrix for Nonstructural Alternatives
2. Conducted Public Outreach Meetings
3. Developed and disseminated a brochure, "*Meeting the CHALLENGE*"
4. Coordination of Policy Issues and Approach

The ITF-FPM approach has been an effective mechanism to coordinate the development and implementation of a floodplain management strategy for the recovery effort.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss why a comprehensive floodplain management strategy is necessary for California, and the role that the ITF-FPM group can play in the execution of a comprehensive plan.

BACKGROUND

The predominant strategy of this century for reducing flood damages has been that of flood control. This flood control strategy focused on the use of dams, levees, channels, and diversions to control the conveyance of flood waters. Significant protection has been provided to many areas, however, our national reliance on flood control has led to other problems, and in some cases a false sense of security for occupants of the floodplain. Some of these problems include the following:

1. Disaster damages that have grown from \$1 billion per year to \$4 billion per year this century.
2. Flood control project requests that greatly exceed federal funding ability.
3. A growing sense that funds for disaster recovery will become more restricted in the future.
4. A flood control project inventory that is reaching its design life.
5. The observation that flood control has led to an intensification of investment and development in the floodplain, leading to much more severe catastrophic damage potential.

In the past several years a new set of strategies, termed nonstructural alternatives, have been advanced to stay back from the floodplain rather than encroach the floodplain. In contrast to the benefits of a structural approach typically related to protecting investments in the floodplain, or in some

cases a strategy to "reclaim" lands in the floodplain; the nonstructural strategy is premised on removing investments from harm or for providing a broader floodplain in which stream systems can attenuate flow and reduce the pressure on adjacent segments that are in fact controlled. Similarly, nonstructural projects tend to promote the co-equal objectives of floodplain management as identified by the President's Unified National Program for Floodplain Management of flood loss reduction, and the management of the floodplain's natural and beneficial functions.

In Central California following the floods of December 96 -- January 97, some interest was expressed in the examination of nonstructural alternatives by groups that included Federal and state agencies, private citizens, reclamation districts and other non-governmental entities. This interest was fueled in part by the need to achieve broader floodplain management objectives that would alleviate the threat of flooding and to reduce flood damages regionally. Additionally, there remains the problem of unresolved flood control concerns between those that live upstream and those subjected to flooding downstream.

In addition, the structural integrity of the levee systems in California vary widely. Those that are part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers program administered under PL84-99 and regular project authorities are in better condition than others. This is largely due to the inspection program that is administered. However, no agency (State or Federal) checks the integrity of private levees, such as those located along the Cosumnes River. Many of these levees were constructed when there were no uniform construction standards. It is doubtful when constructed that they would have used the best possible material. Thus, the levees were not built to uniform standards. To do that, the cost would have been enormous and thus prohibitive. To repair levees to today's standards would cost millions of dollars, therefore there must be an alternative approach. Repairing damaged levees is no longer an acceptable solution.

This is not to infer that nonstructural alternatives are some panacea that will automatically eliminate disaster damages. However, non structural alternatives do play a vital role in a comprehensive floodplain management strategy that when used collectively with flood control, and avoidance techniques will significantly reduce flood damage.

California is particularly well suited to evaluate a comprehensive floodplain management strategy as evidenced by the strong support for these types of concepts in the recently released Governor's FEAT Report.

Concurrent to the California efforts, in enacting the Water Resources Development Act of 1996, Congress required that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, through its PL84-99 program consider nonstructural alternatives instead of repairing levees. At the same time, the Clinton Administration, through the Office of Management and Budget and the Council on Environmental Quality, identified the need to establish an Interagency Task Force (ITF), made up of both Federal and state agencies to review levee repair efforts and incorporate a nonstructural alternative process. As the Corps moved forward with implementation of the PL84-99 program several parameters were established. These included:

- Restoration of flood protection by November 1, 1997 (start of next flood season)
- Interagency Task Force established with the Corps as the Lead agency to review final reports for nonstructural alternatives
- Outreach program requirements

Premises of Flood Plain Management Strategy

A. There are short term opportunities under the PL84-99 program, and the need for a long term evaluation of the system.

B. For a nonstructural alternative to be implementable, it will generally require the joint resources and authorities of multiple state and Federal agencies.

C. It is essential that the work of the working group and state and Federal agencies do not preempt the local decision making process, continued and ongoing outreach is essential.

D. Frequent coordination amongst agencies is necessary. Especially important will be the coordination between the ITF-FPM Working Group and the Governor's Floodplain Management Task Force recommended in the FEAT Report.

E. Current agency authorities are not well suited for nonstructural implementation. This will require ongoing creativity, partnerships, and policy development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Significant gains have been made in California towards the development and implementation of a floodplain management strategy. This has been partially accomplished through the state led efforts and recommendations as captured in the Governor's FEAT Report, the ongoing development of nonstructural alternatives by several Federal agencies (most notably the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and the coordination and outreach efforts of the ITF-FPM Working Group. To assure ongoing success, the ITF-FPM Working Group should continue the following activities:

1. Outreach -- serve as a focal point for the development of outreach strategies.
2. Implementation -- the ITF-FPM Working Group members serve as a vehicle to seek resolution to funding and policy issues potentially preventing implementation.
3. Long Range Strategy -- develop a strategy that will Lead to the long term evaluation and implementation needs of the area.
4. Coordination - Frequent coordination, at a minimum monthly, will be necessary for the ITF-FPM Working Group. Likewise, it would be important to mesh the activities of the ITF-FPM Working Group with the newly formed State Floodplain Management Task Force.